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### Unemployment Rate Remains Steady at 7.6 Percent

OLYMPIA – Washington's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained at 7.6 percent in September following a revision to the August rate, Employment Security Commissioner Sylvia P. Mundy announced today. The nation's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained at 6.1 percent. Washington's non-adjusted unemployment rate fell by two-tenths of a percentage point to 7.0 percent.

August's unemployment rate, previously reported at 7.5 percent, was revised to 7.6 percent – showing a one-tenth of a percentage point increase from July.

“The labor market is not getting significantly worse,” said Mundy, “but rather seems to be bumping along what is hoped to be the bottom. Both the number of employed workers and the unemployed count declined this month, leaving the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate unchanged. The nation continues to recover in fits and starts.”

Washington's nonagricultural wage and salary employment increased by 10,800 jobs in September. The largest gains were in government, where education began seasonal hiring for the new school year. Local government education was up 6,100, state government education was up 7,400, and private educational services was up 2,900. In addition, health care and social assistance was up 1,000, professional and business services was up 300, transportation, warehousing, and utilities was up 100, and retail trade was up 100.

Other industries are starting fall layoffs; these include construction, down 1,000 jobs over the month, and leisure and hospitality, down 3,800. Manufacturing lost 600 jobs over the month; most of these were accounted for by aerospace, which was down 1,100. This was offset by an increase of 800 jobs in food processing, which showed some seasonal strength. Information was down 500 jobs over the month, partly due to a 100-job decline in software publishing. Surprisingly, telecommunications finally showed some over-the-month strength, up 200 jobs.

Over the year, jobs in Washington were down 8,100 since September 2002. This is the largest over-the-year decline since October 2002. While Washington managed to post over-the-year job increases for the first six months of 2003, losses re-emerged in July and have been growing since that time. Although manufacturing has been the weakest sector throughout the recession, service sector jobs grew sufficiently during the first six months of 2003 to just outweigh the losses in manufacturing. Since July 2003, however, the service sector has not gained enough jobs to create net job growth in the economy. There have been widespread, albeit small, increases in construction and all private service industries other than information, transportation, and wholesale trade. But government is now losing jobs. Since September 2002, the government sector is down 6,900 jobs. This includes job losses in federal government (-1,500) and local government (-6,300). State government is up by 900 jobs, however the increases are all in state education which gained 1,200 jobs, while other state government jobs are down 300.